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## BERRY'S "OLD TESTAMENT AMONG SEMITIC RELIGIONS"

*The Old Testament among the Semitic Religions.* By GEORGE RICKER BERRY, Ph.D., D.D., Professor of Semitic Languages, Colgate College. Philadelphia: The GRIFFITH & ROWLAND PRESS [ , 1910]. pp. 215.

ONE reads so often the statement—with variations, of course—that nearly all the doctrines of the Hebrews were derived from Babylonia, that a change is welcome. The present volume, however, offers us more than that. It has merits of its own and is rather instructive, especially for the general reader. The author, though a staunch believer in the divine character of the Old Testament, tries his best to be impartial. He discusses the often ventilated question: What features of the Old Testament teachings are to be considered as distinctively Hebrew, and what features are common to the Hebrews and some other nation or nations. The book is divided into five parts and contains a rather useful, selected bibliography. In the first part the author gives a brief sketch of Semitic history and discusses preliminary problems: To what extent shall chronological matters enter into the discussion? How did the different nations borrow from one another, aside from the Hebrews?

The second part deals with divine nature: personality, unity, and spirituality; the metaphysical attributes of God: eternity, omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience; and His moral attributes: faithfulness, righteousness, and love, including mercy and grace.

Personality is prominent in all the Semitic religions. Unity is the especially marked contrast to the common Semitic view, al-

though tendencies in the direction of monotheism are to be noted elsewhere. Spirituality is characteristically Hebrew, although traces of it seem to be found in other religions as well. God is infinitely superior to ordinary human limitation in regard to time, power, space, and knowledge. Polytheism limits the gods in their past history by the belief that they are descended from one another, and to a certain extent by their connection with created material objects. The power of one god is limited by that of others. The idea of local gods is the chief limitation in reference to space. Both limitations imply limitation of knowledge as well. Faithfulness which is the most prominent feature of God's attributes, regarded as a result of His eternity, can only be discerned to a slight extent in any of the other Semitic religions. A conception of righteousness, of impartial justice between individuals and nations, is not met with outside of the Old Testament. Justice was not thought of in dealings with other nations. Still traces of divine justice are found in other religions as well. The attribute of love is found to a large extent in all the religions under consideration. Yet in polytheism, while some of the gods love, others hate.

The third part deals with the conception of sin, salvation through sacrifices, considering certain general features of Semitic sacrifice, the Babylonian teachings of salvation through incantation, and the Hebrew teaching of salvation in other ways. As for sins of ritual nature, the biblical conception shows a marked similarity to the common Semitic ideas and has thus no ethical character. But for the most part another view is presented in the Old Testament. In the teachings of the prophets, psalmists, and wisdom writers emphasis is laid upon sins of an ethical nature. The great difference between the Old Testament system of sacrifices and that of the other Semites consists in the limiting of the sphere of the efficacy of sacrifices: the sins for which the sacrifices make provision, are those done unwittingly. Salvation through incantation was in Babylonia very conspicuous, while prohibited in the Bible. The conception of salvation apart from the sacrifices has no real parallel in other religions.

The fourth part investigates the conception of future life—the Messianic idea, the meaning of the Hebrew *Sheol*—and reward and punishment in the future life.

In the fifth part the author summarizes the results and discusses certain conclusions. As for the source of the distinctive elements in the Hebrew teachings, there is no connection with the other Semitic religions. The Old Testament conceptions are far superior. And yet the Hebrews were by no means superior to the other Semites. There seems then to be no *human* cause for the result; that is clearly evident. A new cause is here in operation. That cause is the special *revelation of God*.

It cannot be denied that the author shows generally a fair judgment. It would indeed have required more than human ability to construct from the Babylonian fragments of ethical conceptions an ethical edifice such as is presented in the Old Testament. Still there are certain points to which the reviewer takes exception. The views of Neilsen and Lagrange that monotheism was the early Semitic belief, and polytheism a later development, are by no means improbable. It looks indeed as if in a very early Babylonian period *Anum* was not merely the representative of heaven, but simply 'the God.' It is not without significance that the ideogram AN for Anum—in Old Babylonian inscriptions—is used as determinative for designating divine beings, and the abstract noun *anūtu* is a synonym of *ilūtu* 'divinity,' used interchangeably. The earliest triad, *Anum*, *Ellil*, and *Ea* do not stand on an equality in point of origin, as the author contends; in the Code of Hammurabi (Col. XXXVI, 46) *Anum* is called *abu ilī*, 'the father of the gods,' and this designation has nothing to do with the idea of local gods, as in proper names and in other inscriptions, since the god of Hammurabi was *Bēl-Marduk*, and *Anum* was only the local god of *Uruk*. The original character of *Anum* seems to have been known to the Babylonian scholars even in later times. In the mythological lists (II R 54, No. 3, Obv. 1) we find enumerated many descendants or emanations of *Anum*, among whom we meet with *Lahmu* and *Lahamu*, *An-shar* and *Ki-shar*, who according to the Creation-legend were the earliest gods of the Babylonians. In the quoted lists (No. 4, 36) *Anum*

is identified with AN-SHAR-GAL, one of his emanations, as <sup>11u</sup> *Anum sha kishshat shamē ū iršitim*, 'Anum the representative of the totality of heaven and earth,' corresponding to אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ (Gen. 24, 2), or perhaps more exactly to קִנְהָ שְׂמִים וְאֶרֶץ (*possessor*) (*ibid.*, 14, 19). He could well be identical with the South-Arabic *ilu*, by borrowing in one direction or another, if not by common inheritance, and his name was perhaps originally not pronounced *Anum* but *ilu* or *dingir* (comp. the equations in S<sup>a</sup> Col. II, 19. 20; *i-lu* = <sup>11u</sup> *A-nu-um*; *di-in-gir* = <sup>11u</sup> *A-nu-um*). If so, it may well be possible that אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן is in every respect identical with *Anum*, i. e. *ilum* who is called in the Code of Hammurabi (Col. I, 1) AN *ši-rum*, 'the high(est) *Anum*.' The power, presence, and justice of the Babylonian gods, especially those connected with sun, moon, and stars, were by no means confined to the regions where they dwelt. Did not the Babylonians know that these luminaries shine everywhere? The cities were merely regarded as the central seats of the gods, their inhabitants, being in close relation with the gods, believed themselves to be looked upon by the gods with special favor.

In regard to sacrifices, the Old Testament conception differs from that of the other Semitic religions that no sacrifices can atone for sins, even committed unwittingly, against fellow-men, if there is no possibility of making amends for them, as murder, misconduct with a married woman, etc. God can only forgive sins in this world, if no human beings suffer by them.

### WEIR'S "ARABIC PROSE COMPOSITION"

*Arabic Prose Composition.* By T. H. WEIR, B.D., M.R.A.S.,  
Lecturer in Arabic in the University of Glasgow. Cambridge:  
at the UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1910. pp. 191.

THE road to Arabia is not a pleasant one. There is hardly a proper text-book enabling the student of Arabic to overcome the difficulties encountered at every step, and therefore any guide lending the student a helping hand must be highly welcome. The